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SONGS OF FOUR CENTURIES



SONGS  
OF  
FOUR CENTURIES  
PART I

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H. G. D. TURNBULL, M.A.  
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DECCAN COLLEGE, POONA



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## PREFACE

THIS anthology is designed primarily for the use of Indian students, a purpose which has had some influence both on the selection of the poems and on the character of the notes, some of which would hardly be called for by English readers. Even so, some apology will, I suppose, be expected. The aim of the book is to combine in a way which, as far as I know, is a new feature in an English anthology, good poetry with a certain amount of literary appreciation, criticism and history, together with such biographical matter as seemed to me to be of interest and importance. Whenever a poem appeared to need a few words of introduction to help the student, so to speak, to focus the glass aright, these have been prefixed. In the short biographical and critical introductions to each poet I have tried to be neither 'precious' nor original, but to give the student what the majority of reasonable critics would regard as the accepted opinion on the subject. I have therefore avoided touching on a few matters on which I hold somewhat heretical views, and I know that most of the things I have said have been, in substance, said before. But if the book succeeds in making it easier for students to bring poetry into a closer connection than before with literary history and criticism, its purpose will have been fulfilled.

The poems selected represent a compromise between the old and the new. A certain number of them have never appeared before in any book of this kind and room had to be found for them by the omission of many well-known favourites, such as Gray's *Elegy*, and a good

many poems of Wordsworth, with which I hope the student is already familiar.

I believe that all the poems included in the book are good of their kind. With this opinion I hope that the majority of readers will agree.

The book has been divided into two parts of approximately equal length, those in the second part being on the whole either in language or in thought more difficult than those in the first.

H. G. D. TURNBULL

*Poona, 9th October 1920.*

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## BEN JONSON

[Ben Jonson (1573 (?)—1637), like his later namesake, Dr. Johnson, was a man of large size, strong personality and strong opinions, which led him into many literary quarrels. His chief work was for the stage, and he developed the comedy of humours, in which almost every character is a type, exhibiting a predominant 'humour'—a conception 'something like the ruling passion' by which Pope tried to explain human nature. '*Every Man in His Humour*' and '*Every Man out of His Humour*' (acted in 1599 by the company to which Shakespeare belonged) carry the label of his method; his masterpieces are generally considered to be *Volpone* or *The Fox*, *The Silent Woman* and *The Alchemist*. Jonson was a man of immense learning, with which his plays are rather over-weighted. One of the most important things he did was to write a fine tribute 'To the memory of my beloved master William Shakespeare', which shows us that Jonson (who knew all the leading actors and playwrights of the time) had no doubt that Shakespeare the actor was also Shakespeare the dramatist. In spite of his learning and the heaviness of his plays he had a gift for form and grace in the lyric. The *Hymn to Diana* is sung to a musical accompaniment by Hesperus in *Cynthia's Revels* (v. iii); it is a good example of Jonson's mastery of a genuinely classical perfection.]

### I

#### *Hymn to Diana*

QUEEN and huntress, chaste and fair,  
Now the sun is laid to sleep,  
Seated in thy silver chair,  
State in wonted manner keep:  
Hesperus entreats thy light,      5  
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade  
Dare itself to interpose;  
Cynthia's shining orb was made  
Heaven to clear when day did close :      10  
Bless us then with wished sight,  
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,  
And thy crystal-shining quiver;  
Give unto the flying hart  
Space to breathe, how short soever:  
Thou that mak'st a day of night,  
Goddess excellently bright.

## WILLIAM BROWNE

[William Browne (1588—1643), was a Devonshire man who went to Oxford and the Inner Temple. His best known work was his *Britannia's Pastorals*, which is full of allusions to his native Devonshire, but (like most other modern 'pastorals') is now read only by scholars. He seems to have belonged to a band of young literary men who were known as 'sons' of Ben Jonson and Jonson wrote some verses of judicious praise for the *Pastorals*. The beautiful lines on the Countess of Pembroke have often been attributed to Jonson, but the evidence that they were written by Browne is practically conclusive. The epitaph is notoriously a test of poetic craftsmanship, and there are few finer epitaphs than this.]

### 2

#### *Epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke*

UNDERNEATH this sable herse  
Lies the subject of all verse :  
Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother :  
Death, ere thou hast slain another  
Fair and learn'd and good as she,  
Time shall throw a dart at thee.

5

### 3

## ROBERT HERRICK

[Robert Herrick (1591—1674), was a Cambridge M. A. and, like William Browne, one of the 'sons' of Ben Jonson. He entered the church, and obtained the 'living' of Dean Prior in Devonshire; thence in 1647 he was ejected by the Puritans (who were sworn enemies of the Muses); it is comforting to remember that the Restoration brought him back to Dean Prior. His *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* appeared in 1648. Herrick is a natural 'singer' if ever there was one. Many of the Caroline poets had a gift for verse that was as much a song as a poem, but Herrick's gift in this line was unsurpassed. Most of his poems—as beffited one who lived in Devonshire—are full of the freshness and charm of the country. The lines to *Anthea*—one of the best known of English songs—are an example of Herrick's felicity of phrase in the courtly love-song.]

### 3

*To Anthea, who may command him Anything*

**B**ID me to live, and I will live  
Thy Protestant to be;  
Or bid me love, and I will give  
A loving heart to thee.

4

A heart as soft, a heart as kind,  
A heart as sound and free  
As in the whole world thou canst find,  
That heart I'll give to thee.

8

Bid that heart stay, and it will stay  
To honour thy decree:  
Or bid it languish quite away,  
And't shall do so for thee.

12

Bid me to weep, and I will weep  
While I have eyes to see;  
And, having none, yet will I keep  
A heart to weep for thee.

16

Bid me despair, and I'll despair  
 Under that cypress-tree :  
 Or bid me die, and I will dare  
 E'en death to die for thee.

20

Thou art my life, my love, my heart,  
 The very eyes of me :  
 And hast command of every part  
 To live and die for thee.

24

## 4

*Make much of Time*

[The old idea that youth is transitory and to be enjoyed while we have it. It is not easy to reanimate such a commonplace into poetry, but Herrick's light and fresh touch is equal to the occasion].

**G**AATHER ye rose-buds while ye may,  
 Old Time is still a-flying :  
 And this same flower that smiles to-day,  
 To-morrow will be dying.

4

The glorious lamp of heaven, the Sun,  
 The higher he's a-getting,  
 The sooner will his race be run,  
 And nearer he's to setting.

8

That age is best which is the first,  
 When youth and blood are warmer ;  
 But being spent, the worse, and worst  
 Times still succeed the former.

12

Then be not coy, but use your time ;  
 And while ye may, go marry :  
 For having lost but once your prime,  
 You may for ever tarry.

16

## JOHN MILTON

[John Milton (1608—1674), a name by general consent second only to that of Shakespeare in English poetry, was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. In early youth he began, with austere and lofty purpose, to prepare himself for the composition of some great work. To this end he devoted six years to reading and meditation at his father's house at Horton in Buckinghamshire ; he says himself that 'he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem.' During this period he wrote among other poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and *Lycidas*—each in its own way an almost perfect production. In 1638 he paid a visit to Italy to complete his course of Self-education but returned to England as soon as he thought that his duty to the state called him to help the cause of Parliament against the Crown. For about 20 years he was lost to poetry, writing political pamphlets (of which the best known is his *Areopagitica*, defending the liberty of printing) and acting as Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth. In 1652 he lost his eyesight and after the Restoration in 1660 the blind poet turned to what had been the great purpose of his life, and by 1665 he had completed *Paradise Lost*, which was published two years later. The theme is the Biblical story of the Fall of Man, to which Milton leads up by an account of the war in heaven between the rebellious angels (headed by Satan) and God, a story which is not derived from the Bible. Into the magnificent picture of Satan, Milton—himself of a somewhat rebellious nature—has put his own austere courage and lofty pride. He would probably have rejected the suggestion that he sympathised with Satan, but there is no doubt that Satan is the most interesting figure in the poem, and he has even been called by some the hero of it. In the earlier books of the epic at any rate he is a splendid and imposing figure.

*Paradise Lost*, like Virgil's *Aeneid*, is an epic of the 'literary' class as opposed to the more popular and national type such as Homer's *Iliad*. It is somewhat deficient in human interest ; we read it nowadays not for its theology or its view of the world (which is obsolete) but for its essential poetry, its splendid workmanship and its wonderful harmonies. In style, and in the variety and sonorous harmony of his blank verse, Milton is unrivalled.

The scene of the poem opens in Hell, shortly after Satan and his followers have been cast from Heaven. They are lying stupefied ; Satan is the first to recover and addresses to Beelzebub the speech from which our first extract is taken.]

*The unconquerable Will*

**Y**ET not for those,

Nor what the potent Victor in his rage  
 Can else inflict, do I repent or change  
 (Though changed in outward lustre) that fixt mind, 5  
 And high disdain from sense of injur'd merit,  
 That with the Mightiest rais'd me to contend,  
 And to the fierce contention brought along  
 Innumerable force of spirits arm'd  
 That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring,  
 His utmost power with adverse power oppos'd 10  
 In dubious battel on the plains of Heaven,  
 And shook his throne. What though the field be lost ?  
 All is not lost ; the unconquerable will,  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
 And courage never to submit or yield, 15  
 And what is else not to be overcome ?  
 That glory never shall his wrath or might  
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace  
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power,  
 Who from the terror of this arm so late 20  
 Doubted his empire, that were low indeed,  
 That were an ignominy' and shame beneath  
 This downfall ;

*The 'Archangel Ruined'*

[After Satan has made his speech to Beelzebub, he rouses his followers. They form up in battle array. Milton describes the various leaders of this host and then gives us the following picture of 'their dread commander' Satan as he appears when he reviews his men and 'through the armed files Darts his experienced eye.]

**T**HUS far these beyond

Compare of mortal prowess, yet observ'd  
 Their dread commander : he above the rest  
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent

Stood like a tow'r ; his form had yet not lost 5  
 All her original brightness, nor appear'd  
 Less than archangel ruin'd, and th' excess  
 Of glory' obscur'd : as when the sun new ris'n  
 Looks through the horizontal misty air  
 Shorn of his bea[n]s, or from behind the moon 10  
 In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds  
 On half the nations, and with fear of change  
 Perplexes monarchs. Dark'n'd so, yet shon  
 Above them all th' Archangel : but his face  
 Deep scars of thunder had intrencht, and care 15  
 Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
 Of dauntless courage, and conside'rate pride  
 Waiting revenge : cruel his eye, but cast  
 Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
 The fellows of his crime, the follo'wers rather, 20  
 (Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd  
 For ever now to have their lot in plain,  
 Millions of spirits for his fault amerc't  
 Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendors flung  
 For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood, 25  
 Their glory wither'd. As when Heaven's fire  
 Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,  
 With singed top their stately growth though bare  
 Stands on the blasted heath.

### *The Approach of Night*

[In Book iv of *Paradise Lost* Milton describes the Garden of Eden and the happy life of Adam and Eve in their state of innocence. Of the following passage Sir Walter Raleigh says: 'Milton is often seen at his best on the tritest theme which he handles after his own grave fashion by comprehensive statement, measured and appropriate, heightened by none save the most obvious metaphors and depending for almost all its charm on the colouring of the inevitable epithet and the solemn music of the cadence.' Note the simplicity of the means by which Milton attains his effects in both the following passages. He presents the primary beauties of Nature's changing face with straightforward simplicity and yet produces an effect of the utmost beauty.]

**N**OW came still Evening on, and Twilight gray  
 Had in her sober livery all things clad ;  
 Silence accompanied ; for beast and bird,  
 They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,  
 Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.  
 She all night long her amorous descant *sung* :  
 Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament  
 With living sapphires ; Hesperus, that led  
 The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,  
 Rising in clouded majesty, at length  
 Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,  
 And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

6

12

## 8

*Adam and Eve*

[Night has just fallen over Eden, as described in No. 7 ; Adam has addressed Eve about their work and plans for the next day and Eve replies in the following beautiful lines.]

**W**ITH thee conversing, I forget all time,  
 All seasons and their change ; all please alike.  
 Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,  
 With charm of earliest birds ; pleasant the Sun,  
 When first on this delightful land he spreads  
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,  
 Glistening with dew ; fragrant the fertile Earth  
 After soft showers ; and sweet the coming-on  
 Of grateful Evening mild ; then silent Night,  
 With this her solemn bird, and this fair Moon,  
 And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train :  
 But neither breath of Morn, when she ascends  
 With charm of earliest birds ; nor rising Sun  
 On this delightful land ; nor herb, fruit, flower,  
 Glistening with dew ; nor fragrance after showers,  
 Nor grateful Evening mild ; nor silent Night,  
 With this her solemn bird ; nor walk by moon,  
 Or glittering star-light, without thee is sweet.

5

10

15

## MARQUIS OF MONTROSE

[James Graham (1612—1650), grandson of the third Earl of Montrose (who had been Viceroy of Scotland when James succeeded to the English Crown), was first on the side of the covenanters in the Civil War and twice defeated the Royalist forces. In 1641 however he went over to the side of the King and won five battles against the covenanters, though he was defeated at Philiphaugh in 1645. In 1650 he invaded Scotland in the name of Charles II, but was defeated, captured, and hanged at Edinburgh. He met his end with serene courage. 'Honour is my Life' was the entry Montrose made in his Bible, and his immortal love song strikes the same note, and with the same inspired felicity, as the best poems of Lovelace.]

(*The Execution of Montrose* forms the subject of one of the best known of Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*).

### 9

*I'll never love thee more*

**M**Y dear and only Love, I pray  
That little world of thee  
Be govern'd by no other sway  
Than purest monarchy ;  
For if confusion have a part  
(Which virtuous souls abhor),  
And hold a synod in thine heart,  
I'll never love thee more.

4

8

Like Alexander I will reign,  
And I will reign alone ;  
My thoughts did evermore disdain  
A rival on my throne.  
He either fears his fate too much,  
Or his deserts are small,  
That dare not put it to the touch,  
To gain or lose it all.

12

16

\* \* \* \*

But if thou wilt prove faithful then,  
And constant of thy word,  
I'll make thee glorious by my pen  
And famous by my sword ;  
I'll serve thee in such noble ways  
Was never heard before ;  
I'll crown and deck thee all with bays,  
And love thee more and more.

20

24

## RICHARD LOVELACE

[Richard Lovelace (1618—1658), in his best poems represents the highest poetry of the Cavalier Muse ; in himself he was of a fine and generous type—such as only an aristocratic tradition at its best can produce. Born of a wealthy family (he was the eldest son of Sir William Lovelace) he was educated at Charterhouse and Oxford, was reputed the handsomest man of his time, and united a devotion to classical literature with skill in feats of arms. As was perhaps fitting he had a romantic and pathetic career. He took part in Charles' expedition to Scotland in 1639, and for presenting a Royalist petition to Parliament he was imprisoned in 1642, and in prison he wrote his beautiful lyric 'To Althea.' In 1646 he was wounded at Dunkirk in France and was reported killed ; his betrothed 'Lucasta' then married another man, and Lovelace on returning to England was again imprisoned. In 1649 he published his *Lucasta*. Like many other cavaliers he had spent much of his fortune in the service of the King ; he squandered what was left when he lost his betrothed, and died in extreme poverty. Altogether, a gallant and attractive figure, like most of the cavalier poets he wielded his pen 'with the negligent ease of a man of quality' and though he could often write poorly, his best things are quite unsurpassable in their own kind. Love—in a high and chivalrous sense—and honour have found in his verse a perfect expression and combination.]

10

*To Lucasta, on going to the Wars*

**T**ELL me not, Sweet, I am unkind  
That from the nunnery  
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,  
To war and arms I fly.

4

True, a new mistress now I chase,  
The first foe in the field ;  
And with a stronger faith embrace  
A sword, a horse, a shield.

8

12

Yet this inconstancy is such  
 As thou too shalt adore ;  
 I could not love thee, Dear, so much,  
 Loved I not Honour more.

12

## II

*To Althea from Prison*

**W**HEN love with unconfined wings  
 Hovers within my gates,  
 And my divine Althea brings  
 To whisper at the grates ;  
 When I lie tangled in her hair  
 And fetter'd to her eye,  
 The gods that wanton in the air  
 Know no such liberty.

4

When flowing cups run swiftly round  
 With no allaying Thames,  
 Our careless heads with roses crown'd,  
 Our hearts with loyal flames ;  
 When thirsty grief in wine we steep,  
 When healths and draughts go free,  
 Fishes that tipple in the deep  
 Know no such liberty.

12

When, like committed linnets, I  
 With shriller throat shall sing  
 The sweetness, mercy, majesty  
 And glories of my King ;  
 When I shall voice aloud how good  
 He is, how great should be,  
 Enlarged winds, that curl the flood,  
 Know no such liberty.

20

Stone walls do not a prison make,  
 Nor iron bars a cage ;  
 Minds innocent and quiet take  
 That for an hermitage :  
 If I have freedom in my love  
 And in my soul am free,  
 Angels alone, that soar above,  
 Enjoy such liberty.

28

32

## WILLIAM COLLINS

[William Collins (1721—1759), was educated at Winchester and Oxford and published his *Odes* in 1747. Their fresh and simple beauty did not appeal to an age which had been brought up on the poetry of Pope, and the author in a fit of anger burned almost all the copies. About 1750 he was attacked by brain disease, and the rest of his life was, like Cowper's, composed of alternating intervals of sanity and madness. Collins is often called one of the precursors of the later Romantic Revival. As a lyric poet with a natural gift of fresh, clear song he stands alone in his age.]

### I2

#### *How sleep the Brave*

**H**OW sleep the brave, who sink to rest  
By all their country's wishes blest!  
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,  
Returns to deck their hallow'd mould,  
She there shall dress a sweeter sod  
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

6

By fairy hands their knell is rung;  
By forms unseen their dirge is sung;  
There Honour comes, a pilgrim grey,  
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;  
And Freedom shall awhile repair  
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there!

12

### I4

## OLIVER GOLDSMITH

[Oliver Goldsmith (1728—1774), was born at Pallasmore, county Longford, Ireland, where his father was a Protestant clergyman. His father was transferred to Lissoy in Westmeath, from which Goldsmith took some of the features of his *Deserted Village*. The atmosphere of the home was typically Irish—one of improvidence and of indiscriminate and quixotic charity—a virtue which Goldsmith practised at Trinity College, Dublin, to his own detriment. His adventures after taking his degree in 1749 are too numerous to chronicle here, but all the while, and especially when he roamed over the Continent, supporting himself by playing the flute, he was gaining experience of life and materials for later work. When he returned to England in 1756 he was reduced to all sorts of shifts to earn a living—schoolmastering, correcting proof-sheets, and hack-writing generally. It was not till 1761 when he was introduced to Dr. Johnson and became one of his circle, that he began to make anything like a name. In that year he published *The Traveller*: from the point of view of diction and metre *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* represent the last noteworthy productions of the Popian School—soon to be overwhelmed by the on-coming wave of the Romantic movement. But just as Goldsmith was a far more loveable and better-hearted man than Pope, so his verse has a tenderness and a sincerity which make the total effect very different from that poet's. The same qualities which have made *The Vicar of Wakefield*—in spite of its faults—a classic, constitute the attractiveness of Goldsmith's poetry.

The *Deserted Village* which he describes is not a copy from any one original; it blends features of an Irish with those of an English village. The desertion of the village by its inhabitants, and their emigration to America, Goldsmith attributes to the tyranny of the unscrupulous landlord. Though we can hardly regard the poem as a historical document, it contains some pictures which have a permanent place in English poetry, such as those of the village schoolmaster and the parish clergyman. The latter is the subject of our extract here.]

*The Village Clergyman*

NEAR yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,  
 And still where many a garden flower grows wild ;  
 There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,  
 The village preacher's modest mansion rose.

A man he was to all the country dear, 5  
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year ;  
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,  
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place ;  
 Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,  
 By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour ; 10  
 Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,  
 More skill to raise the wretched than to rise.  
 His house was known to all the vagrant train ;  
 He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain :  
 The long-remember'd beggar was his guest, 15  
 Whose beard descending swept his aged breast ;  
 The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,  
 Claimed kindred there, and had his claim allowed ;  
 The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,  
 Sat by his fire, and talked the night away, 20  
 Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrows done,  
 Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.  
 Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,  
 And quite forgot their vices in their woe ;  
 Careless their merits or their faults to scan, 25  
 His pity gave ere charity began.  
 Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,  
 And e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side ;  
 But in his duty prompt at every call,  
 He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all ; 30  
 And, as a bird each fond endearment tries  
 To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
 He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,  
 Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.  
 Beside the bed where parting life was laid, 35  
 And sorrow, guilt, and pain, by turns dismayed,

The reverend champion stood. At his control  
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul ;  
Comfort came down the trembling wretch to raise,  
And his last faltering accents whispered praise. 40

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,  
His looks adorned the venerable place ;  
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,  
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.

The service past, around the pious man, 45  
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran ;  
E'en children followed with endearing wile,  
And plucked his gown, to share the good man's smile.

His ready smile a parent's warmth expressed ;  
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distressed : 50  
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,  
But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven.

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,  
Swell's from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread, 55  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

## WILLIAM BLAKE

[William Blake (1757—1827), one of the strangest figures in the history of English literature, was a Londoner nearly all his life. By profession he was a painter and designer, and some of his work in this field is very remarkable ; in temperament and habit he was a mystic and a visionary. Though of high moral character, Blake would not, by ordinary standards, be called quite sane, and his *Prophetic Books* seem to the plain man little better than the ravings of a lunatic. But he possessed at the same time a gift for simple and spontaneous lyrical poetry which in diction and rhythm has a natural charm of its own. To the end of his life Blake remained a child, and his best lyrics might have been written by an inspired child. He was a Romantic before the days of the Romantic movement in this sense—that he cared nothing for rule and precedent and owed nothing to any contemporary influence. He probably owed something to the Elizabethans, but he is too original to be classed as belonging to any school. At the same time some of his earlier poems, such as *To the Muses*, are definitely 18th century in style.]

### 14

#### *To the Muses*

WHETHER on Ida's shady brow  
Or in the chambers of the East,  
The chambers of the sun, that now  
From ancient melody have ceased; 4

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,  
Or the green corners of the earth,  
Or the blue regions of the air  
Where the melodious winds have birth; 8

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,  
Beneath the bosom of the sea,  
Wandering in many a coral grove ;  
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry ; 12

How have you left the ancient love  
 That bards of old enjoy'd in you !  
 The languid strings do scarcely move,  
 The sound is forced, the notes are few. 16

## 15

*Reeds of Innocence*

[This is the opening poem of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1787). Blake could not afford to pay for the printing of his poems and so (being an engraver by trade) he hit upon the idea of engraving on copper both the words and the designs. The child on the cloud referred to in line 3 is probably meant to be taken literally. Blake was a regular seer of visions and he made a number of interesting drawings of faces seen by him in vision.]

**P**IPING down the valleys wild,  
 Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
 On a cloud I saw a child,  
 And he laughing said to me : 4

‘ Pipe a song about a Lamb ! ’  
 So I piped with merry cheer.  
 ‘ Piper, pipe that song again ; ’  
 So I piped : he wept to hear. 8

‘ Drop thy pipe—thy happy pipe ;  
 Sing thy songs of happy cheer ! ’  
 So I sung the same again,  
 While he wept with joy to hear. 12

‘ Piper, sit thee down and write  
 In a book that all may read ’.  
 So he vanish'd from my sight ;  
 And I pluck'd a hollow reed, 16

And I made a rural pen,  
 And I stain'd the water clear,  
 And I wrote my happy songs  
 Every child may joy to hear. 20

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

[William Wordsworth (1770—1850), was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland. He lost both his father and mother early, but spent a healthy and happy boyhood amid the beautiful scenery from which he learned to love and interpret nature. He went to Cambridge and took his degree but achieved no academic distinction. A visit to France made him an ardent revolutionary, but the Reign of Terror rather disillusioned him, and, after his return, he developed, like Coleridge, into a conservative. To Coleridge, of whom he saw a great deal at this time, he owed—like so many others—much in the way of mental stimulus. The publication in 1798 of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the joint work of the two poets, is generally regarded as the first notable utterance of the Romantic movement. After a visit to Germany (from which characteristically he derived very little, while Coleridge derived so much) he returned to the Lake District, where Grasmere and Rydalmount will always be associated with his name. His life thenceforward was one of steady work, happy family affections, and (after some years) of steadily increasing fame. In 1843, on the death of Southey, he became Poet-Laureate. In more than one way Wordsworth illustrates the reaction against 18th century classicism;—in his worship of nature (he is the chief interpreter of 'inanimate' nature in English poetry); in his selection of the more primitive and simple emotions of simple men as material for his poetry; in his theory that there is no essential difference between the language of prose and that of poetry (this theory, as his friend Coleridge showed, was much too strongly expressed and was seldom adhered to by Wordsworth himself in his own poetry—never in his greatest poetry). 'Wordsworth's poetry', said Matthew Arnold, 'is great because of the extraordinary power with which he feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which he shows us this joy and renders it so as to make us share it.' But Wordsworth could also at times attain the note of genuine sublimity, as in the great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* and *Lines composed near Tintern Abbey*, which are as different as anything can well be from poems like *Alice Fell* and *Lucy Gray*. The first of our extracts represents Wordsworth in his simpler vein; the latter in the mood of deep reflection in which he not seldom achieved a genuine sublimity.]

*Fidelity*

[‘In the Spring of 1805 a young gentleman. . . . perished by losing his way on the mountain Helvellyn. His remains were not discovered till three months afterwards, when they were found guarded by a faithful terrier, his constant attendant during solitary rambles through the wilds of Cumberland and Westmoreland.’ *Scott.*]

**A** BARKING sound the shepherd hears,  
A cry as of a dog or fox;  
He halts and searches with his eyes  
Among the scattered rocks:  
And now at distance can discern  
A stirring in a brake of fern;  
And instantly a dog is seen,  
Glancing from that covert green.

8

The dog is not of mountain breed;  
Its motions, too, are wild and shy;  
With something, as the shepherd thinks,  
Unusual in its cry:  
Nor is there anyone in sight,  
All round, in hollow or on height;  
Nor shout nor whistle strikes his ear;  
What is the creature doing here?

16

It was a cove, a huge recess,  
That keeps, till June, December’s snow;  
A lofty precipice in front,  
A silent tarn below!  
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,  
Remote from public road or dwelling,  
Pathway, or cultivated land;  
From trace of human foot or hand.

24

There sometimes doth a leaping fish  
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;  
The crags repeat the raven’s croak,  
In symphony austere;

Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—  
 And mists that spread the flying shroud ;  
 And sun-beams ; and the sounding blast,  
 That, if it could, would hurry past,  
 But that enormous barrier binds it fast.

32

Not free from boding thoughts, a while  
 The shepherd stood : then makes his way  
 Towards the dog, o'er rocks and stones,  
 As quickly as he may ;  
 Nor far had gone before he found  
 A human skeleton on the ground ;  
 The appalled discoverer with a sigh  
 Looks round, to learn the history.

40

From those abrupt and perilous rocks  
 The man had fallen, that place of fear !  
 At length upon the shepherd's mind  
 It breaks, and all is clear :  
 He instantly recalled the name,  
 And who he was, and whence he came ;  
 Remembered, too, the very day  
 On which the traveller passed this way.

48

But hear a wonder, for whose sake  
 This lamentable tale I tell !  
 A lasting monument of words  
 This wonder merits well.  
 The dog, which still was hovering nigh,  
 Repeating the same timid cry,  
 This dog had been through three months' space    56  
 A dweller in that savage place.

Yes, proof was plain that since the day  
 On which the traveller thus had died,  
 The dog had watched about the spot,  
 Or by his master's side :  
 How nourished here through such long time  
 He knows, who gave that love sublime,  
 And gave that strength of feeling, great  
 Above all human estimate.

64

*To Milton*

[The following sonnet is a sequel to the sonnet entitled *London 1802* in which Wordsworth eloquently reproved the growing spirit of materialism and extravagance. He himself preached and practised plain living and high thinking. The austere simplicity of Milton and his devotion to his conception of duty was an example which a degenerate age (as it seemed at times to Wordsworth) should bear in mind. In a third sonnet Wordsworth says to his country 'Of these unfilial fears I am ashamed'; he sees in England 'a bulwark for the cause of man'; his love for her had inspired his fears. In a temperament and outlook there is not a little in common between Wordsworth and Milton.]

**M**I LTS ON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :  
England hath need of thee : she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,

Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men :  
O ! raise us up, return to us again ;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.

Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart :  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free ; II

So didst thou travel on life's common way  
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

*The Rainbow*

[An expression of the poet's delight in the beauty of nature for its own sake—the delight which a child can take in beautiful form and colour. Without this fresh and simple pleasure life, says the poet, would be little worth.]

MY heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky :  
So was it when my life began,  
So is it now I am a man,  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die !  
The Child is father of the Man :  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety. 5

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

[Walter Scott (1771—1832), was the son of an Edinburgh lawyer and came of a famous old border family. Early in youth he developed a taste for legend and for the romance of the past, especially as connected with local scenes, and he began to lay the foundation of his enormous knowledge in this field—a knowledge which he was afterwards to use to such wonderful effect. His first literary work was a translation of some recent German romantic literature. As Sheriff of Selkirkshire (=the old Ettrick Forest) he spent the summer at Ashiestiel (west of Galashiels) on the Tweed, in the very heart of the Border—perhaps the richest locality of the world in romantic and poetic legend. In 1802 he published his *Border Minstrelsy*, a collection enriched by his own notes. At Ashiestiel Scott wrote *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. They achieved a success which had been denied to the earlier *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Yet it was from Coleridge's *Christabel* (which he had heard recited before it was published) that he derived the well-known octosyllabic metre of his narrative poems. Without these models before him it is very doubtful whether Byron would have produced the romantic poems which were to displace Scott's historical verse—tales in popular favour. His removal to Abbotsford (where he indulged his taste for building and filled quite ideally the part of a semi-feudal country gentleman) almost coincided with the commencement of the great series of Waverley Novels. Their success once assured, Scott wrote practically no more poetry. In 1820 he was made a baronet but in 1826 came the financial failure of a publishing firm with which he was connected. Scott heroically rejected the idea of bankruptcy and devoted himself to the tremendous task of paying off over a hundred thousand pounds by his pen. He almost succeeded, but he killed himself in the effort. Scott was a truly great man; he combined great strength, moral, intellectual and physical, with tenderness and geniality. Anyone reading his biography by his son-in-law Lockhart may well exclaim, with Tennyson :

O great and gallant Scott,  
True gentleman, heart, blood and bone,  
Would it had been my lot  
To have seen thee and heard thee and known !

Scott the poet is rather overshadowed by Scott the novelist, but his poetry has great merits. As a narrator he is unsurpassed and when all deductions for loose work and prosaic intervals in his long poems are made they still

remain (in spite of great differences) the nearest thing in English to Homer. No poet ever described rapid action or a hard-fought battle more finely than Scott. The magnificent stanza on Flodden will serve as a proof. Besides this, Scott had a gift for lyric of quite a high order, especially of a somewhat dashing kind. In verse and in prose he recreated the middle ages for Europe and was the first to show what the historical imagination can achieve. ]

## 19

*Coronach*

[Coronach (Gaelic) = a lament for the dead, a dirge. This beautiful little lyric occurs in *The Lady of the Lake* and is intended to be a version in poetical English of the kind of lament which might have been heard among Celtic Highlanders. That in its handling of images from nature it suggests a Celtic 'atmosphere' most judges would admit.]

**H**E is gone on the mountain,  
He is lost to the forest,  
Like a summer-dried fountain,  
When our need was the sorest.

4

The font reappearing,  
From the rain-drops shall borrow,  
But to us comes no cheering,  
To Duncan no morrow !

8

The hand of the reaper  
Takes the ears that are hoary,  
But the voice of the weeper  
Wails manhood in glory.

12

The autumn winds rushing  
Waft the leaves that are searest,  
But our flower was in flushing,  
When blighting was nearest.

16

Fleet foot on the correi,  
Sage counsel in cumber,  
Red hand in the foray,  
How sound is thy slumber !

20

Like the dew on the mountain,  
 Like the foam on the river,  
 Like the bubble on the fountain,  
 Thou art gone, and for ever!

24

20

*The Quiet Life**(Lucy Ashton's song)*

[This song and the answer, may be compared (as contrasting different views of life) with Dryden's dialogue from *Aurangzeb*. Here the contrast is not between optimism and pessimism but between the active and the quietest view of life. 'Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay' wrote Tennyson, *i. e.*, the strenuous life is preferable to mere torpor.]

**L**OOK not thou on beauty's charming ;  
 Sit thou still when kings are arming ;  
 Taste not when the wine-cup glistens ;  
 Speak not when the people listens ;  
 Stop thine ear against the singer ;  
 From the red gold keep thy finger ;  
 Vacant heart and hand and eye,  
 Easy live and quiet die.

21

*The strenuous Life*

**S**OUND, sound the clarion, fill the fife !  
 To all the sensual world proclaim,  
 One crowded hour of glorious life  
 Is worth an age without a name.

*Helvellyn*

[Vide introductory note to No. 16. The difference between Scott's and Wordsworth's treatment of the same subject is striking. Wordsworth is plain and simple, even, at times, to baldness ; Scott is much more ornamental and rhetorical. The difference is especially marked in Scott's fourth stanza.]

I CLIMB'D the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn,  
Lakes and mountains beneath me gleam'd misty  
and wide;

All was still, save by fits, when the eagle was  
yelling,

And starting around me the echoes replied.  
On the right, Striden-edge round the Red-tarn was  
bending,

And Catchedicam its left verge was defending,  
One huge nameless rock in the front was ascending,  
When I mark'd the sad spot where the wand'r'r  
had died. 8

Dark green was the spot 'mid the brown mountain  
heather,

Where the Pilgrim of Nature lay stretch'd in  
decay,

Like the corpse of an outcast abandon'd to weather,  
Till the mountain winds wasted the tenantless  
clay. 12

Nor yet quite deserted, though lonely extended,  
For, faithful in death, his mute favourite attended,  
The much-loved remains of her master defended,  
And chased the hill-fox and the raven away. 16

How long didst thou think that his silence was  
slumber?

When the wind waved his garment, how oft didst thou start?

How many long days and long weeks didst thou  
number.

Ere he faded before thee, the friend of thy heart?

And, oh, was it meet, that no requiem read o'er him—

No mother to weep, and no friend to deplore him,

And thou, little guardian, alone stretched before  
him—

## Unhonour'd the Pilgrim from life should depart ? 24

When a Prince to the fate of the Peasant has yielded,  
The tap'stry waves dark round the dim-lighted  
hall;

With scutcheons of silver the coffin is shielded,

And pages stand mute by the canopied pall : 28

Through the courts, at deep midnight, the torches  
are gleaming;

In the proudly-arched chapel the banners are beaming,

Far adown the long aisle sacred music is streaming,  
Lamenting a Chief of the people should fall.

But meeter for thee, gentle lover of nature,  
To lay down thy head like the meek mountain  
lamb.

When, wilder'd, he drops from some cliff huge in stature.

And draws his last sob by the side of his dam. 36

And more stately thy couch by this desert lake  
lying,

Thy obsequies sung by the grey plover flying,  
With one faithful friend but to witness thy dying,  
In the arms of Helvellyn and Catchedicam. 40

*Flodden*

**B**UT as they left the dark'ning heath,  
More desperate grew the strife of death.  
The Englisch shafts in volleys hail'd,  
In headlong charge their horse assail'd;  
Front, flank, and rear, the squadrons sweep  
To break the Scottish circle deep, 5

That fought around their King.

But yet, though thick the shafts as snow,  
Though charging knights like whirlwinds go,  
Though bill-men ply the ghastly blow,  
Unbroken was the ring; 10

The stubborn spearmen still made good  
Their dark impenetrable wood,  
Each stepping where his comrade stood,

The instant that he fell.

No thought was there of dastard flight;  
Link'd in the serried phalanx tight,  
Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,

As fearlessly and well;

Till utter darkness closed her wing  
O'er their thin host and wounded King.  
Then skilful Surrey's sage commands  
Led back from strife his shatter'd bands;

And from the charge they drew,

As mountain-waves, from wasted lands,  
Sweep back to ocean blue.

Then did their loss his foemen know;  
Their King, their Lords, their mightiest low,  
They melted from the field as snow,

When streams are swoln and south winds blow, 30  
Dissolves in silent dew.

Tweed's echoes heard the ceaseless splash,  
While many a broken band,

Disorder'd, through her currents dash,  
To gain the Scottish land;

To town and tower, to down and dale,  
To tell red Flodden's dismal tale,

5

10

15

20

25

35

And raise the universal wail.  
 Tradition, legend, tune, and song,  
 Shall many an age that wail prolong :  
 Still from the sire the son shall hear  
 Of the stern strife, and carnage drear,  
 Of Flodden's fatal field,  
 Where shiver'd was fair Scotland's spear,  
 And broken was her shield !

40

45

## 24

*Fitz-James and Roderick Dhu*

[ Fitz-James (King James V of Scotland in disguise) has made a dangerous journey into the Highlands to visit Ellen Douglas and offer her his hand—which she refuses. The King's forces are about to attack Clan-Alpine (of which Roderick is the chief) and the clansmen have already been roused by the summons of 'the fiery cross'. While trying to make his way back at nightfall Fitz-James, as he rounds a huge rock, comes upon a watch-fire. He is at once challenged by a Highlander, who with generous chivalry offers to guide him back at dawn as far as a certain ford unharmed. But there he must defend himself. Fitz-James accepts and they both sleep 'like brothers tried' by the fire. Next morning they set out and on their way discuss the coming war. The subject of Roderick naturally arises ; Fitz-James rashly calls him a murderer and a freebooter, to which the Highlander angrily replies that the Saxons (*i.e.*, the Lowland Scots and their Kings) are intruders who have stolen the lands of the Gael, and that Fitz-James is suspected of being a spy. To this Fitz-James replies as follows. ]

**W**ELL, let it pass, nor will I now  
 Fresh cause of enmity avow,  
 To chafe thy mood and cloud thy brow.  
 Enough, I am by promise tied  
 To match me with this man of pride :  
 Twice have I sought Clan-Alpine's glen  
 In peace ; but when I come agen,  
 I come with banner, brand, and bow,  
 As leader seeks his mortal foe.  
 For love-lorn swain, in lady's bower  
 Ne'er panted for the appointed hour,

5

10

As I, until before me stand  
This rebel Chieftain and his band!—

'Have, then, thy wish!'—He whistled shrill,  
And he was answer'd from the hill ; 15  
Wild as the scream of the curlew,  
From crag to crag the signal flew.  
Instant, through copse and heath, arose  
Bonnets and spears and bended bows ;  
On right, on left, above, below, 20  
Sprung up at once the lurking foe ;  
From shingles grey their lances start,  
The bracken bush sends forth the dart,  
The rushes and the willow-wand  
Are bristling into axe and brand, 25  
And every tuft of broom gives life  
To plaied warrior arm'd for strife.  
That whistle garrison'd the glen  
At once with full five hundred men,  
As if the yawning hill to heaven 30  
A subterranean host had given.  
Watching their leader's beck and will,  
All silent there they stood, and still,  
Like the loose crags, whose threatening mass  
Lay tottering o'er the hollow pass, 35  
As if an infant's touch could urge  
Their headlong passage down the verge,  
With step and weapon forward flung,  
Upon the mountain side they hung.  
The Mountaineer cast glance of pride 40  
Along Benledi's living side,  
Then fix'd his eye and sable brow  
Full on Fitz-James—' How say'st thou now ?  
These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true ;  
And, Saxon,—I am Roderick Dhu !' 45

## S. T. COLERIDGE

[ Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772—1834), was born at Ottery, Saint Mary, (in South Devonshire). It is worth noting that Wordsworth, Scott, and Coleridge were all born between 1770 and 1772. He was educated at Christ's Hospital (where he made friends with his schoolfellow Charles Lamb, who has described for us the rather hard life of the school in those days) and at Jesus College, Cambridge. After an interval of soldiering (for which Coleridge was singularly unfitted) he returned to Cambridge and visited Oxford, where he met Southey and formed with him the scheme of a 'pantisocracy' (a society where all are equal) to be founded in America. Ideas of universal brotherhood and equality were 'in the air' at the time (1794) and were destined to produce curious results in France a few years later. Coleridge could, later on, smile at his youthful Utopia (which, of course, came to nothing); but he was all his life a dreamer, one who began many things and finished few. His first volume of poems was published in 1796 but contained nothing notable. In that year he took a cottage at Nether Stowey (on the border of Somerset) and the visit which Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy paid him there next year resulted in the publication of '*Lyrical Ballads*' in 1798. To this Coleridge contributed the unique and wonderful *Ancient Mariner*. A visit to Germany followed shortly after; there Coleridge imbibed a good deal of German philosophy of the idealist kind then in fashion. His unfortunate addiction to opium weakened a will that was never strong and the rest of his life was very desultory—a story of works planned but seldom finished and often not begun. As a talker (in the monologue style) he was unrivalled and many men owed inspiration to him. As a literary critic of a philosophic type he takes high rank. The poet in him unfortunately died young, but while that poet lived he produced some genuinely inspired work which, like all supreme work, is unique in its kind. *The Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel* and *Kubla Khan* are known to all. A few other poems have something of the same quality, among them being the little lyric which follows *The Knight's Tomb*. The pathetic epitaph which he wrote for himself tells the story of what he felt to have been on the whole a life of tragedy—the tragedy of weak will and of great gifts never fully used. It runs:—

Stop, Christian passer-by!  
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.; . . . .

That he who many a year with toil of breath  
Found death in life, may here find life in death.]

25

*The Knight's Tomb*

WHERE is the grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn ?  
Where may the grave of that good man be ?  
By the side of a spring, on the breast of Helvellyn,  
Under the twigs of a young birch tree !  
The oak that in summer was sweet to hear, 5  
And rustled its leaves in the fall of the year,  
Is gone—and the birch in its stead is grown.—  
The Knight's bones are dust,  
And his good sword rust ;—  
His soul is with the saints, I trust. 10

## CHARLES LAMB

[Charles Lamb (1775—1834), was the son of a London clerk and was all his life a genuine Londoner. He was educated at Christ's Hospital (where he made friends with Coleridge), obtained a clerkship at the India Office and retired on pension after many years' service. This apparently uneventful life contained both tragedy and heroism. In 1796, his sister Mary went mad and slew her mother; Lamb decided never to marry and devoted himself to looking after his sister. Lamb is of course best known for his immortal *Essays of Elia* which have endeared him to successive generations of readers. He wrote some occasional poetry; in the well-known lines that follow we have an expression of the sadness that Lamb must have often felt but which was generally hidden by his playful humour and his sympathy for others.]

### 26

#### *The Old Familiar Faces*

I HAVE had playmates, I have had companions,  
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days—  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces. 3

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,  
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies—  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces. 6

I loved a Love once, fairest among women :  
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces. 9

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man :  
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly ;  
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces. 12

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,  
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,  
Seeking to find the old familiar faces. 15

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,  
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling ?  
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

18

How some they have died, and some they have left me,  
And some are taken from me ; all are departed—  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

21

## THOMAS MOORE

[Thomas Moore (1779—1852), was born in Dublin ; he started to write lyric verse very early and soon established a great reputation. His fame rests now chiefly on his ' Irish Melodies ' (1807), which were meant to be (and frequently are) sung to music, but the *Twopenny Postbag* is well worth reading by those who care for political verse. The sham-Oriental *Lalla Rookh* (1817) was very popular in its day but its charms have somewhat faded. There are some superior critics who tell us that the same applies to Moore's lyrics, and that work like that of Keats, Tennyson and Swinburne, which is so much richer in poetical colour and suggestion, has rendered Moore of no value. But this is a wrong method of criticism. Moore's lyrics were meant to be sung ; he aimed therefore at a light and easy flow combined with polish. In these aims he certainly succeeded and of *their kind* the best of Moore's lyrics are as good as anybody's. That the kind is not the highest is another matter. Moore was a close friend and admirer of Byron, and in 1830 published his *Life of Byron*—a well written and successful production, though it cannot be said to exhaust the subject.]

27

### *When He Who Adores Thee*

[The following lines are supposed to be addressed to his country by Robert Emmet, a young leader in the foolish and hopeless Irish rebellion of 1803. The conspiracy was discovered and ended miserably in some street fighting. Emmet was executed. He was an idealist of poetical temperament and might well have written something like this poem.]

**W**HEN he who adores thee has left but the name  
    Of his faults and his sorrows behind,  
Oh, say wilt thou weep, when they darken the fame  
    Of a life that for thee was resign'd ?  
Yes, weep, and however my foes may condemn,      5  
    Thy tears shall efface their decree ;  
For Heaven can witness, though guilty to them,  
    I have been but too faithful to thee.

37

With thee were the dreams of my earliest love ;  
 Every thought of my reason was thine ; 10  
 In my last humble prayer to the Spirit above  
 Thy name shall be mingled with mine.  
 Oh, blest are the lovers and friends who shall live  
 The days of thy glory to see !  
 But the next dearest blessing that Heaven can give 15  
 Is the pride of thus dying for thee.

28

*At the mid Hour of Night*

**A**T the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly  
 To the lone vale we loved, when life shone warm in  
 thine eye ;  
 And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions of air,  
 To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me  
 there,  
 And tell me our love is remember'd even in the sky. 5

Then I sing the wild song it once was rapture to hear,  
 When our voices commingling breathed like one on  
 the ear ;  
 And as Echo far off through the vale my sad orison rolls,  
 I think, O my love ! 'tis thy voice from the Kingdom of  
 Souls,  
 Faintly answering still the notes that once were so dear. 10

*The Light of other Days*

OFT, in the stilly night,  
 Ere slumber's chain has bound me,  
 Fond Memory brings the light  
 Of other days around me: 5  
 The smiles, the tears,  
 Of boyhood's years,  
 The words of love then spoken ;  
 The eyes that shone,  
 Now dimm'd and gone,  
 The cheerful hearts now broken !  
 Thus, in the stilly night,  
 Ere slumber's chain has bound me,  
 Sad Memory brings the light  
 Of other days around me.

When I remember all  
 The friends, so link'd together,  
 I've seen around me fall,  
 Like leaves in wintry weather ;  
 I feel like one,  
 Who treads alone  
 Some banquet-hall deserted,  
 Whose lights are fled,  
 Whose garlands dead,  
 And all but he departed !  
 Thus, in the stilly night,  
 Ere slumber's chain has bound me,  
 Sad Memory brings the light  
 Of other days around me. 25

*Dear Harp of my Country*

[ In the following lines Moore claims to have founded modern Irish poetry, which is of course figured as a harp, the traditional symbol of Erin. The claim was no vain boast, and Moore puts it as prettily and modestly as any poet could. ]

**D**EAR Harp of my country! in darkness I found thee,  
 The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,  
 When proudly, my own Island Harp, I unbound thee,  
 And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song ! 4

The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness  
 Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill ;  
 But, so oft hast thou echoed the deep sigh of sadness,  
 That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still. 8

Dear Harp of my country ! farewell to thy numbers,  
 This sweet wreath of song is the last we shall twine !  
 Go, sleep with the sunshine of Fame on thy slumbers,  
 Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine ; 12

If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,  
 Have throbb'd at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone ;  
 I was but as the wind, passing heedlessly over,  
 And all the wild sweetness I wak'd was thy own. 16

## LORD BYRON

[ George Gordon Noel Byron (1788-1824), came, on both sides, of a stock in which wild and passionate qualities were strongly marked. He was educated at Harrow and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he displayed 'Byronism' in the form of general insubordination. He had succeeded to his title early and in 1807 published *Hours of Idleness*; a severe criticism of this somewhat juvenile work called forth the vigorous satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, in which among many others he satirised Wordsworth and Scott. After travelling by land and sea in and round Southern Europe for two years he published in 1812 the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. This new type of romantic poetry written by a handsome and dashing young lord, and dealing with his own passionate life, at once took the public taste and Scott, like the generous man he was, owned himself beaten. There followed a series of tales in verse—*The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*, which were extremely popular but have stood the test of time less successfully than Scott's narrative poetry. In 1815 he married, but his wife left him in the following year, giving rise to much unprofitable scandal and to a general outcry against Byron, who left England never to return. Of the works which he afterwards published, *Cain* had some importance in his day, and *Don Juan*, which, mingled with its cynicism, contains some admirable satire and a great deal of cleverness and wit, is still very much alive. Byron's association with Shelley at Pisa is perhaps the most noteworthy event of this part of his life. In 1823 he left Italy for Greece to help the Greeks in their struggle against the Turks. There he displayed both sense and courage but died of fever at Missolonghi after a few months of more or less active service. Byron was and is essentially the poet of 'the Revolution' not only in his support of political freedom but in his insistence on the freedom of the individual from the ideas, conventions and laws of the past, and in his incapacity for self-control. On the Continent he has been the most influential and the most admired of English poets; in England to-day it is probable that his work is undervalued. There are a few extremists who hold that Byron, like Pope, is not a genuine poet at all but only a rhetorician in verse. It is probably a juster view that when we have made allowance for Byron's affections, his 'Byronism' and his admittedly careless workmanship, there remains a body of work (e. g. the finer passages in *Childe*

'*Harold* and a number of lyrics) which, in spite of occasional defects of poetic taste in the best of it, is likely to remain part of the most noteworthy poetry in English.

'He taught us little ; but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll'

wrote Matthew Arnold ; it is likely that he will long be felt.]

## 31

*Elegy on Thyrza*

**A**ND thou art dead, as young and fair  
As aught of mortal birth ;  
And form so soft and charms so rare,  
Too soon return'd to Earth !  
Though earth received them in her bed,  
And o'er the spot the crowd may tread  
In carelessness or mirth,  
There is an eye which could not brook  
A moment on that grave to look.

9

I will not ask where thou liest low,  
Nor gaze upon the spot ;  
There flowers or weeds at will may grow,  
So I behold them not :  
It is enough for me to prove  
That what I loved, and long must love,  
Like common earth can rot ;  
To me there needs no stone to tell,  
'Tis Nothing that I loved so well.

18

Yet I did love thee to the last  
As fervently as thou,  
Who didst not change through all the past,  
And canst not alter now.  
The love where Death has set his seal,  
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,  
Nor falsehood disavow :  
And, what were worse, thou canst not see  
Or wrong, or change, or fault in me.

27

The better days of life were ours ;  
 The worst can be but mine ;  
 The sun that cheers, the storm that lowers,  
 Shall never more be thine.  
 The silence of that dreamless sleep  
 I envy now too much to weep ;  
 Nor need I to repine,  
 That all those charms have pass'd away  
 I might have watch'd through long decay.

36

The flower in ripen'd bloom unmatch'd  
 Must fall the earliest prey ;  
 Though by no hand untimely snatch'd,  
 The leaves must drop away ;  
 And yet it were a greater grief  
 To watch it withering, leaf by leaf,  
 Than see it pluck'd to-day ;  
 Since earthly eye but ill can bear  
 To trace the change to foul from fair.

45

I know not if I could have borne  
 To see thy beauties fade ;  
 The night that follow'd such a morn  
 Had worn a deeper shade :  
 Thy day without a cloud hath pass'd,  
 And thou wert lovely to the last ;  
 Extinguished, not decay'd ;  
 As stars that shoot along the sky  
 Shine brightest as they fall from high.

54

As once I wept, if I could weep,  
 My tears might well be shed,  
 To think I was not near to keep  
 One vigil o'er thy bed ;  
 To gaze, how fondly ! on thy face,  
 To fold thee in a faint embrace,  
 Uphold thy drooping head ;  
 And show that love, however vain,  
 Nor thou, nor I, can feel again.

63

Yet how much less it were to gain,  
 Though thou hast left me free,

The loveliest things that still remain,  
 Than thus remember thee !  
 The all of thine that cannot die  
 Through dark and dread Eternity  
 Returns again to me,  
 And more thy buried love endears  
 Than aught, except its living years.

72

32

*She walks in Beauty*

**S**HE walks in beauty, like the night  
 Of cloudless climes and starry skies ;  
 And all that's best of dark and bright  
 Meet in her aspect and her eyes :  
 Thus mellow'd to that tender light  
 Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

5

One shade the more, one ray the less,  
 Had half impair'd the nameless grace  
 Which waves in every raven tress,  
 Or softly lightens o'er her face ;  
 Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
 How pure, how dear their dwelling place.

10

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
 But tell of days in goodness spent,  
 A mind at peace with all below,  
 A heart whose love is innocent !

15

*The Magic of Night*

IT is the hour when from the boughs  
The nightingale's high note is heard ;  
It is the hour when lover's vows  
Seem sweet in every whisper'd word ;  
And gentle winds, and waters near,  
Make music to the lonely ear. . . . .  
Each flower the dews have lightly wet,  
And in the sky the stars are met,  
And on the wave is deeper blue,  
And on the leaf a browner hue,  
And in the heaven that clear obscure,  
So softly dark, and darkly pure,  
Which follows the decline of day,  
As twilight melts beneath the moon away.

5

10

## H. W. LONGFELLOW

[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807—1882), was born at Portland, Maine, U. S. A. The impression that the harbour and its ships made on him as a boy is reflected in the lines:—

I remember the black wharves and the slips  
And the sea-tide, tossing free,  
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips  
And the beauty and the mystery of the ships,  
And the magic of the sea.

He was educated at Bowdoin College, where, after three years of travel in Europe to prepare himself for the post, he became Professor of Modern Languages. In 1836 he succeeded George Ticknor (the historian of Spanish literature) at Harvard, where he remained as Professor till 1854, when he was in his turn succeeded by another distinguished man of letters, J. R. Lowell. With his first published work he won popularity; he is still the most popular poet in America and is almost equally popular in England. Poems like *The Village Blacksmith*, *Excelsior*, and the *Psalm of Life* are known to and appreciated by thousands who would otherwise know no poetry at all. The *Tales of a Wayside Inn* are excellent popular narrative poetry, and the pathos of *Erangeline* (written in the classical hexameter) will always appeal to many. *The Song of Hiawatha* is generally considered to be his most important work. The subject-matter—the traditions and tales of the American Indians—he derived from H. R. Schoolcraft's works on the subject; the metre, with its easy trochaic movement, he borrowed from the *Kalevala* (the Finnish epic). The result is quite an artistic whole; the poem depicts the life of the prairie and the forest with distinct charm and it has an atmosphere all its own. The less pleasing aspects of the 'Red Man'—as we see them for instance in the works of the historian Parkman—are not obtruded, but it would of course be unfair to expect from a poet dealing with primitive myth a realistic picture of life in all its aspects. Superior critics sometimes affect to despise Longfellow because of his simplicity (of the popular kind). But Longfellow cannot be called a minor poet; the minor poet is always imitative. Longfellow's verse-forms are, of course, simple and unoriginal, but his matter and the spirit in which he handles it produce together a result which we do not

get elsewhere, and it is not to be despised merely because it is popular. Poets, like Keats, Tennyson and Swinburne are masters of a richer and subtler music, but in the house of poetry there are many mansions and there is still room for Longfellow. Lafcadio Hearn, a master of style and a delicate critic himself, who had a long experience of teaching literature in Japan, advised his Japanese friends to begin their study of English poetry with Longfellow. Sir William Watson, with his usual skill and tact in such things, touched the heart of the matter in his epigram *On Longfellow's Death* :

No mighty singer he, whose silence grieves  
 To-day the great West's tender heart and strong ;  
 No singer vast of voice : yet one who leaves  
 His native air the sweeter for his song.]

## 34

*Attendant Spirits*

**M**ANY a year is in its grave,  
 Since I crossed this restless wave ;  
 And the evening, fair as ever,  
 Shines on ruin, rock, and river.  
 Then, in the same boat, beside,  
 Sat two comrades old and tried ;  
 One with all a father's truth,  
 One with all the fire of youth.  
 One on earth in silence wrought,  
 And his grave in silence sought :  
 But the younger, brighter form  
 Passed in battle and in storm.  
 So whene'er I turn my eye  
 Back upon the days gone by,  
 Saddening thoughts of friends come o'er me, 15  
 Friends, who closed their course before me.  
 But what binds us, friend to friend,  
 Save that soul with soul can blend ?  
 Soul-like were those hours of yore :  
 Let us walk in soul once more. 20  
 Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee ;  
 Take : I give it willingly :  
 For, invisible to thee,  
 Spirits twain have crossed with me.

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*The Death of Minnehaha*

[Longfellow took the Iroquois legend of Hiawatha from Schoolcraft's *Algic Researches*. According to the legend, Hiawatha, like Prometheus in the old Greek myth, came on earth as the first great teacher of the arts of civilisation. Indian corn (maize), the art of navigation and medicine were among his gifts to man. When the first white settlers from Europe reached America, Hiawatha, according to the story, ascended to Ponemah, the Land of the Hereafter. Hiawatha was the son of Mudjekeéwis, the West Wind, and Wenónah, daughter of Nokómis. His wooing of Minnehaha (Laughing Water) the daughter 'of the ancient Arrow-maker, in the land of the Dacotahs,' is told by Longfellow in Part X. In Part XX the poet relates how Famine and Fever visited Hiawatha's wigwam (hut of skins) and cast their evil eyes on Minnehaha.]

**F**ORTH into the empty forest  
 Rushed the maddened Hiawatha ;  
 In his heart was deadly sorrow,  
 In his face a stony firmness ;  
 On his brow the sweat of anguish  
 Started, but it froze, and fell not. 5  
 Wrapped in furs, and armed for hunting,  
 With his mighty bow of ash-tree,  
 With his quiver full of arrows,  
 With his mittens, Minjekahwun,  
 Into the vast and vacant forest 10  
 On his snow-shoes strode he forward.  
 " Gitche Manitou, the Mighty ! "  
 Cried he with his face uplifted  
 In that bitter hour of anguish, 15  
 " Give your children food, O father !  
 Give us food, or we must perish !  
 Give me food for Minnehaha,  
 For my dying Minnehaha ! "  
 Through the far-resounding forest, 20  
 Through the forest vast and vacant,  
 Rang that cry of desolation,  
 But there came no other answer  
 Than the echo of his crying,

Than the echo of the woodlands,  
"Minnehaha ! Minnehaha !"

25

All day long roved Hiawatha  
In that melancholy forest,  
Through the shadow of whose thickets,  
In the pleasant days of Summer,  
Of that ne'er forgotten Summer,  
He had brought his young wife homeward,  
From the land of the Dacotahs ;  
When the birds sang in the thickets,  
And the streamlets laughed and glistened,  
And the air was full of fragrance,  
And the lovely Laughing Water  
Said, with voice that did not tremble,  
"I will follow you, my husband !"

30

35

In the wigwam with Nokomis,  
With those gloomy guests, that watched her,  
With the Famine and the Fever,  
She was lying, the Beloved,  
She the dying Minnehaha.

40

"Hark !" she said, "I hear a rushing,  
Hear a roaring and a rushing,  
Hear the Falls of Minnehaha  
Calling to me from a distance !"  
"No, my child !" said old Nokomis,  
"'Tis the night-wind in the pine-trees !"  
"Look !" she said, "I see my father  
Standing lonely at his doorway,  
Beckoning to me from his wigwam,  
In the land of the Dacotahs !"  
"No, my child !" said old Nokomis,  
"'Tis the smoke that waves and beckons !"  
"Ah !" she said, "the eyes of Pauguk  
Glare upon me in the darkness,  
I can feel his icy fingers  
Clasping mine amid the darkness !  
Hiawatha ! Hiawatha !"

45

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And the desolate Hiawatha,  
Far away amid the forest,  
Miles away amid the mountains,  
Heard that sudden cry of anguish,

65

Heard the voice of Minnehaha  
Calling to him in the darkness,  
"Hiawatha ! Hiawatha !"

Over snow-fields waste and pathless,  
Under snow-encumbered branches,  
Homeward hurried Hiawatha,  
Empty-handed, heavy-hearted,  
Heard Nokomis moaning, wailing :  
"Wahonowin ! Wahonowin !  
Would that I had perished for you,  
Would that I were dead as you are!  
Wahonowin ! Wahonowin !"

And he rushed into the wigwam,  
Saw the old Nokomis slowly  
Rocking to and fro and moaning,  
Saw his lovely Minnehaha  
Lying dead and cold before him,  
And his bursting heart within him  
Uttered such a cry of anguish,  
That the forest moaned and shuddered,  
That the very stars in heaven  
Shook and trembled with his anguish.

Then he sat down, still and speechless,  
On the bed of Minnehaha,  
At the feet of Laughing Water,  
At those willing feet, that never  
More would lightly run to meet him,  
Never more would lightly follow.

With both hands his face he covered,  
Seven long days and nights he sat there,  
As if in a swoon he sat there,  
Speechless, motionless, unconscious  
Of the daylight or the darkness.

Then they buried Minnehaha ;  
In the snow a grave they made her,  
In the forest deep and darksome,  
Underneath the moaning hemlocks ;  
Clothed her in her richest garments,  
Wrapped her in her robes of ermine ;  
Covered her with snow, like ermine,  
Thus they buried Minnehaha.

70

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And at night a fire was lighted,  
On her grave four times was kindled,  
For her soul upon its journey  
To the Islands of the Blessed.

110

From his doorway Hiawatha  
Saw it burning in the forest,  
Lighting up the gloomy hemlocks ;  
From his sleepless bed uprising,  
From the bed of Minnehaha,  
Stood and watched it at the doorway,  
That it might not be extinguished,  
Might not leave her in the darkness.

115

“ Farewell ! ” said he, “ Minnehaha !  
Farewell, O my Laughing Water !  
All my heart is buried with you,  
All my thoughts go onward with you !  
Come not back again to labour,  
Come not back again to suffer,  
Where the Famine and the Fever  
Wear the heart and waste the body.  
Soon my task will be completed,  
Soon your footsteps I shall follow  
To the Islands of the Blessed,  
To the kingdom of Ponemah,  
To the land of the Hereafter ! ”

120

125

130

## A. H. CLOUGH

[Arthur Hugh Clough (1819—1861), was educated at Rugby under that great schoolmaster Thomas Arnold, the father of Matthew Arnold. Like Matthew Arnold, he was destined to express in his verse a sense of the importance of the moral issues of life, combined with a half-reluctant abandonment of the firm and definite theological views that meant so much to the elder Arnold. Clough was a scholar of Balliol and became Fellow and Tutor of Oriel. He resigned his Fellowship in 1848 and in 1853 he accepted a post in the Education Office. He died at Florence, and in *Thyrsis*, a 'monody' on his friend's death—one of the most beautiful poems of its kind ever composed—Matthew Arnold wrote, referring to the 'happy omen' of their 'signal-tree,'

‘Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale  
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep  
The morningless and unawakening sleep  
Under the flowery Oleanders pale)’

and a little further on he says :

‘And purer or more subtle soul than thee,  
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see’.

Clough had indeed a high sense of the values of life, a high standard of truth, and a conviction of the difficulty of attaining to any certainty on the great questions of existence. Hence, like Matthew Arnold, he is sometimes called the poet of scepticism. Both however were men of deep moral convictions. Towards the end of the poem Arnold refers to Clough as expressing the spirit of intellectual doubt and dispute which was one of the notes of his time :

‘What though the music of thy rustic flute  
Kept not for long its happy country tone ;  
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note  
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,  
Which task’d thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—  
It failed and thou wast mute !’ ]

*The Stream of Life*

[The 'Stream of Life' has two aspects which blend together in Clough's poem. First it is the life of the individual which flows from the birth to the grave; secondly, it is the mysterious force which we call Nature or Life, on the stream of which the individual feels himself being carried forward.]

O stream descending to the sea,  
Thy mossy banks between,  
The flow'rets blow, the grasses grow,  
The leafy trees are green.

4

In garden plots the children play,  
The fields the labourers till,  
And houses stand on either hand,  
And thou descendest still.

8

O life descending into death,  
Our waking eyes behold,  
Parent and friend thy lapse attend,  
Companions young and old.

12

Strong purposes our minds possess,  
Our hearts affections fill,  
We toil and earn, we seek and learn,  
And thou descendest still.

16

O end to which our currents tend,  
Inevitable sea,  
To which we flow, what do we know—  
What shall we guess of thee?

20

A roar we hear upon thy shore,  
As we our course fulfil;  
Scarce we divine a sun will shine  
And be above us still.

24

*Say not the Struggle naught availeth*

**S**AY not the struggle naught availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain. 4

If hopes were d'ipes, fears may be liars ;  
It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field. 8

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main. 12

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light ;  
In front the sun climbs slow,—how slowly !  
But westward, look, the land is bright ! 16

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

[Matthew Arnold (1822—1888), was the eldest son of Dr. Arnold of Rugby; he was educated at Winchester, Rugby and Balliol. If there is any English poet who may be expected to illustrate the virtues of the 'grand, old fortifying classical curriculum,' it is certainly he. Both at Rugby and Oxford he won the prize for English verse. He became a Fellow of Oriel, but, soon after, married and became an Inspector of Schools. Between 1849 and 1885 he published various volumes of poems, but never issued anything that he had not carefully finished and accounted worthy. He wrote a great deal in prose, including the famous *Essays in Criticism* and a delightful series of lectures *on Translating Homer*. His theological speculations are less generally admired and do not find favour with the expert. Arnold's poetry is not great in bulk, but it maintains a surprisingly high level of accomplishment. It has not much passion, but it has weight of thought—or at any rate sufficiency of thought—expressed with almost unfailing grace and distinction. *The Scholar Gipsy* (in which the beauties of the Oxford country are celebrated with perfect felicity) and *Thyrsis* have, each in its own very similar kind, no superiors in English poetry. *Dover Beach* and *Requiescat* are other admirable and typical achievements. Most of Arnold's poetry brings, to use his own phrase, 'the eternal note of sadness in,' but he himself was one of the cheeriest and most playfully humorous of men.]

*Vide* also introductory note to A. H. Clough (p. 52).

## 38

(From) *Rugby Chapel* (November, 1857)

[Thomas Arnold, the father of the poet, was born in 1795. In 1828 he became Headmaster of Rugby School, on which he impressed the mark of his own personality by the force and depth of his moral and religious convictions. He has often been called the greatest of English headmasters. *Tom Brown's School Days* gives us a well-known picture of life at Rugby under Arnold. In 1841 he was appointed Regius Professor of History at Oxford, but he died in the following year. His contributions to Roman history are by no means to be despised, but it was as a great personality himself and a builder of character in others that he did his unique work. Matthew Arnold's poem is a noble tribute not only to a father but to a great man.]

**C**OLDLY, sadly descends  
 The autumn-evening. The field  
 Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
 Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
 Fade into dimness apace,  
 Silent ;—hardly a shout  
 From a few boys late at their play !  
 The lights come out in the street,  
 In the school-room windows—but cold,  
 Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
 Through the gathering darkness, arise  
 The chapel-walls, in whose bound  
 Thou, my father ! art laid.

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\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

O strong soul, by what shore  
 Tarriest thou now ? For that force,  
 Surely, has not been left vain !  
 Somewhere, surely, afar,  
 In the sounding labour-house vast  
 Of being, is practised that strength,  
 Zealous, beneficent, firm !

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,  
 Conscious or not of the past,  
 Still thou performest the word  
 Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—  
 Prompt, unwearied, as here !  
 Still thou unpraised with zeal,  
 The humble good from the ground,  
 Sternly repressest the bad !  
 Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse  
 Those who with half-open eyes  
 Tread the border-land dim  
 'Twixt vice and virtue ; reviv'st,  
 Succourest ;—this was thy work,  
 This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life  
 Of mortal men on the earth ?—  
 Most men eddy about  
 Here and there—eat and drink,

Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing ; and then they die—  
Perish ;—and no one asks  
Who or what they have been,  
More than he asks what waves,  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,  
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst  
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,  
Not with the crowd to be spent,  
Not without aim to go round  
In an eddy of purposeless dust,  
Effort unmeaning and vain.  
Ah, yes ! some of us strive  
Not without action to die  
Fruitless, but something to snatch  
From dull oblivion, nor all  
Glut the devouring grave !

\* \* \* \* \*

And through thee I believe  
In the noble and great who are gone ;  
Pure souls honour'd and blest  
By former ages, who else—  
Such, so soulless, so poor,  
Is the race of men whom I see—  
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,  
Seem'd but a cry of desire.  
Yes ! I believe that there lived  
Others like thee in the past,  
Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile ;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

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## R. L. STEVENSON

[Robert Louis Stevenson (1850—1894), like Pascal and Pope, is a striking example of what can be achieved by the will to live and do in the face of apparently hopeless ill-health. He was born at Edinburgh, being descended on his mother's side from a branch of the Balfours, on his father's from men who had made a name as builders of lighthouses. Though he attended Edinburgh University he really (like most men of genius) educated himself and his prose style was the result of elaborate experiment and practice. The quest for health took him to Samoa where he built a house known as Vailema and became a famous figure in the island. Like the great Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford he practised an almost boundless hospitality ; unlike Sir Walter he had no great store of physical vitality to draw upon—he was working hard all the time and he died suddenly during a heatwave. In his Essays (such as the volumes entitled *Across the Plains* and *Virginibus Puerisque*) as well as in his delightful letters Stevenson reveals his indomitably brave and generous personality, his love of adventure and romance. On this work and on his novels his reputation of course mainly depends. He was not perhaps in the full sense of the word a poet, though had he not been compelled to write prose fiction for a living he might have produced a larger body of accomplished work in verse than he did. As it is, his *Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) may be said to be popular, and he wrote at times some really fine short poems. As in prose he was a careful and painstaking craftsman and his finish was the finish of a very conscious art with the feeling of a rare personality behind it.]

39

### *In Memoriam F. A. S.*

[An almost perfect poem of consolation on the death of one who has died young. 'He whom the Gods love, dies young', said the Greek proverb ; Stevenson brings out its full meaning in these lines.]

**Y**ET, O stricken heart, remember, O remember  
How of human days he lived the better part.

April came to bloom and never dim December  
Breathed its killing chills upon the head or heart. 4

Doomed to know not Winter, only Spring, a being  
Trod the flowery April blithely for a while,  
Took his fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,  
Came and stayed and went, nor ever ceased to smile. 8

Came and stayed and went, and now when all is  
finished,  
You alone have crossed the melancholy stream,  
Yours the pang, but his, O his, the undiminished  
Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream. 12

All that life contains of torture, toil, and treason,  
Shame, dishonour, death, to him were but a name.  
Here, a boy, he dwelt through all the singing season,  
And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came. 16

40

*Requiem*

[This epitaph was duly inscribed on Stevenson's tomb, on the hill overlooking his house in Samoa.]

**U**NDER the wide and starry sky  
Dig the grave and let me lie:  
Glad did I live and gladly die,  
And I laid me down with a will. 4

This be the verse you grave for me:  
Here he lies where he long'd to be;  
Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter home from the hill. 8

## DAVID SLATER

[Mr. David Slater was educated at Bromsgrove School and Magdalen College, Oxford, and is now Professor of Latin in Liverpool University. He is known to classical scholars for his translation of the *Silvae* of Statius and his admirable renderings of English poetry in Latin verse. The following lines are taken from *Aeneas* (1910). They are a simple but impressive tribute to the character and the work of King Edward VII.]

41

May 1910

**H**ALF-MAST from tower and steeple  
The banners in the wind  
Proclaim to all the people  
The lot of humankind;  
A gallant form has vanished,  
A generous soul has sped;  
An Emperor is banished,  
A King of men is dead.

8

A King, for noble actions  
Enthroned in England's heart,  
An arbiter from factions  
And strife of tongues apart;  
In all her griefs partaking,  
To all her joys alive,  
No drone his task forsaking,  
A worker in the hive.

16

Unflinching and unswerving  
Still for the right he strove,  
As Prince, but schooled in serving,  
As King, but crowned with love.  
For still his high ambition  
To noblest ends he wrought,

MAY 1910

61

And still he plied his mission  
And still for peace he sought.

24

'Tis past the blaze of splendour,  
The long day's course is run ;  
The heart so strong and tender  
The meed of rest has won  
His 'duty done' a message  
To all men from his life,  
His kindness a presage  
Of concord after strife.

32

## JOHN MASEFIELD

[John Masefield was born in 1874 and saw in his youth a good deal of adventure of a kind that brought him to close grips with life. Many men have similar adventures; few can transmute them into literature, still fewer into poetry. In poetry Mr. Masefield has done for the sea what Mr. Joseph Conrad has done in prose—he has reproduced from inside the romance, the colour, the adventure of the sailor's life. In certain realistic studies of humble life he has been less happy. Mr. Masefield has a wide outlook, a keen eye and a vivid sense of the possibilities of life together with no small technical skill—a combination of gifts which may still give us some notable verse. His prose narrative of the British campaign in Gallipoli was one of the very best descriptive books about the War and it is very possible that it will live. The little poem that follows is a typical expression of his attitude towards life—a full-hearted courageous acceptance of strenuous pleasures and pains.]

### 42

#### *Laugh and be merry*

**L**AUGH and be merry, remember, better the world  
with a song,  
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of a wrong.  
Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the length  
of a span.  
Laugh and be proud to belong to the old proud  
pageant of man.

4

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden time,  
God made Heaven and Earth for joy He took in  
a rhyme,  
Made them, and filled them with the strong red wine  
of His mirth,  
The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of the earth.

8

So we must laugh and drink from the deep blue cup  
of the sky,  
Join the jubilant song of the great stars sweeping by,  
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the wine  
outpoured  
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy of the  
Lord. 12

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers akin,  
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful inn,  
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of the  
music ends.

Laugh till the game is played; and be you merry,  
my friends. 16

## PATRICK MACGILL

[Mr. Patrick MacGill was born in 1891 in a village in the wilds of Donegal. He was the eldest of a family of ten and had to make his way in the world as a boy. At the age of twelve he worked as a farm-hand for about sixteen hours a day. At fourteen he went to Scotland and worked as a navvy (and in other similar capacities) for seven years. In spite of toil that would have crushed most men's interests in literature he spent such spare time as he had in reading, and he was rewarded by the success of his *Gleanings from a Navvy's Scrap-book*, which he published at the age of nineteen. London newspaper and literary life followed as a matter of course, but in a poem entitled *The Old Lure* (published in *Songs of the Dead End*) he tells us how the old life, with its feeling of vivid reality, still appealed to him as the best. The experiences of the Great War—in which he served in the ranks with the London Irish Rifles—naturally gave him material for his realistic descriptions and *The Red Horizon* and *The Great Push* describe life and fighting on the Western Front from the point of view of the individual perhaps more directly and vividly than any other books. Prefixed to the chapters of *The Great Push* are some verses. Their simplicity, directness, and sincerity give them a distinct charm.]

### 43

#### *The Fighting at Loos*

THE fire-fly lamps were lighted yet,  
As we crossed the top of the parapet,  
But the East grew pale to another fire,  
As our bayonets gleamed by the foeman's wire  
And the Eastern sky was gold and grey,  
And under our feet the dead men lay,  
As we entered Loos in the morning. 5

The dead men lay on the cellar stair,  
Toll of the bomb that found them there;  
In the streets men fell as a bullock drops,  
Sniped from the fringe of Hulluch copse. 10

## THE FIGHTING AT LOOS

And stiff in khaki the boys were laid—  
Food of the bullet and hand grenade—  
This we saw when the charge was done,  
And the East grew pale to the rising sun  
In the town of Loos in the morning.

15

The turrets twain that stood in the air  
Sheltered a foeman sniper there ;  
They found, who fell to the sniper's aim,  
A field of death on the field of fame—  
And stiff in khaki the boys were laid,  
To the rifle's toll at the barricade ;  
But the quick went clattering through the town,  
Shot at the sniper and brought him down,  
In the town of Loos in the morning.

20

25

The dead men lay on the shell-scarred plain  
Where death and autumn held their reign ;  
Like banded ghosts in the heavens grey  
The smoke of the conflict died away ;  
The boys whom I knew and loved were dead,  
Where war's grim annals were writ in red,  
In the town of Loos in the morning.

30



## **NOTES**



## NOTES

BEN JONSON

1

### HYMN TO DIANA

Diana was a Roman goddess, representing the moon while her brother Dianus or Janus represented the sun. She was identified later on (when Rome began to compare her mythology with that of Greece) with the Greek Artamis the twin-sister of Apollo the sun-god. In Greek literature she figures as the virgin huntress; so Jonson calls her 'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair.'

2. *Now* : now that.
3. *silver chair* : as sunlight is often called golden, moonlight is called silver.
5. *Hesperus*, (Latin *Vesper*) was the Greek name of Venus, the 'evening star' and the brightest of the planets as the 'morning star'. Venus was called Phosphorus or Lucifer (light-bringer).
9. *Oynthia* : the Cynthian goddess *i. e.* Diana; Apollo and Diana were born on Mt. Cynthus (in the island of Delos).
14. *crystal shining* : shining like crystal.

WILLIAM BROWNE

2

### EPITAPH ON THE COUNTESS OF PEMBROKE

1. *hearse* (hearse) : 'a temple-shaped structure of wood used in royal and noble funerals. It was decorated with banners, heraldic devices and lighted candles and it was customary for friends to pin short poems or epitaphs upon it.' (N. E. D.) The usual meaning of hearse now is 'a carriage for carrying the coffin at a funeral.'

3. She was sister of the famous Sir Philip Sidney—poet, scholar, courtier, the hero of Zutphen and the flower of Elizabethan chivalry—who wrote his *Arcadia* for her. She was mother of William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke, who has been thought by some to be the mysterious 'Mr. W. H.' to whom Shakespeare's sonnets are inscribed. He was a friend of Ben Jonson and from him Pembroke College, Cambridge, takes its name. The Countess died in 1621 and was buried in Salisbury Cathedral.

## ROBERT HERRICK

3

## TO ANTHEA, WHO MAY COMMAND HIM ANYTHING

2. "No one has ever been quite certain" says Prof. Saintsbury, "what the word 'Protestant' means; yet every one who knows poetry feels that 'Protestant' could not be changed for any other word without loss." 'Champion' is perhaps the nearest equivalent.

18. The cypress was traditionally the emblem of mourning.

22. *very eyes*: very (Lat. *verus*=true) is often used as an adjective to give emphasis to the substantive.

4

## MAKE MUCH OF TIME

2. *still* : (as usually in Shakespeare)=always, continuously, in l. 12 it=always.

11. *being spent* : sc. that first age.

15. 'but' goes closely with 'lost' as well as with 'once.'

## JOHN MILTON

5

## THE UNCONQUERABLE WILL

(*From Paradise Lost I.*)

1. *for those* : because of the superior power of his arms (the thunder). Milton in describing the invisible spirit of Satan was almost certainly thinking of the old Greek myth of Prometheus (so finely represented by the dramatist Aeschylus) according to which Prometheus resists with unyielding courage all the tortures that the superior power of Zeus can inflict on him.

4. *fixt* : steadfast.

11. *dubious*: the battle is described in Book VI, l. 179-866. It lasted three days: during one night Satan invents cannon and gunpowder, according to Milton, and uses them next day with great effect.

12. *shook his throne*: this of course is Satan's boast. Milton does not represent the issue of the battle as ever really in doubt.

14. *study* : desire for and endeavour after (the meaning of the Latin *studium*).

16. And what else does not-to-be-overcome mean but a refusal to submit? i. e. invincibility lies in an unconquerable will.

17. *glory* : sc. of not being overcome.

19. *deify* : worship.

## THE ARCHANGEL RUINED

(From *Paradise Lost I.*)

2. *Compare* : comparison.  
*observed* : obeyed.  
6. *her* : Milton uses the feminine pronoun because the Latin forma is feminine.  
7. *excess* : like the sun at which one cannot gaze directly, but only when obscured by mist or cloud.  
11. *disastrous* : boding disaster ; probably a reminiscence of the phrase in Hamlet (i. l. 118) 'disasters in the sun.' *Disastrous* (Lat. *dis* + *astrum* = star) is properly an astrological term. In Milton's day the old belief in the influence of the stars was still held by many people.  
13. There is a tradition that the Licenser for the Press objected to this simile as having the look of a treasonable utterance in the reference to 'monarchs'.  
15. *scars of thunder*, left by the lightning with which the Almighty had blasted Satan.  
*intrencht* : dug into. The usual meaning of the word is 'surrounded by a trench' e. g. 'an intrenched camp'.  
17. *considerate* : full of thought.  
20. Note the play on the words 'fellows' and 'followers.'  
23. *amerc't* : lit. 'fixed' (Latin *ad* + *merciare*).  
25. *how they stood* : sc. to behold (carried on from l. 19).  
27. *scathed* : hurt, injured.  
29. *blasted* : scorched and withered.

## THE APPROACH OF NIGHT

(From *Paradise Lost IV.*)

6. *descant* : melody, song.  
8. *Hesperus* : the Evening Star.  
10. *i. e.* at first rising majestically amid clouds and then fully revealed as queen.  
11. 'Apparent' in Elizabethan English generally means 'evident.'

## ADAM AND EVE

1. *charm* : song (Latin *carmen*)  
6. *orient* : rising.  
9. *grateful* : pleasant.  
10. *solemn bird* : the nightingale ; v. ll 5-7 of the previous extract.

## MARQUIS OF MONTROSE

9

## I'LL NEVER LOVE THEE MORE

The poet, claiming the single-hearted devotion of his beloved pictures himself as a monarch over the kingdom of love. He will have none to share his power.

7. *synod*: properly a council or meeting of ecclesiastics; then, any meeting or council.

22. *Was never heard*: in prose this would be 'as were never heard.'

23. *bays*: the wreath of bay-leaves was the emblem of fame and success; the laurel is often used as equivalent to it.

## RICHARD LOVELACE

10

## TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO THE WARS

2. *nunnery*: in the sense of 'calm and pure retreat.'

6. *first foe*: probably = foremost of the enemy.

11 and 12. These two lines have become proverbial as the expression of that type of love in which the sense of honour—the scorning of anything base—is a main element. On the other hand it has been said that 'Love would not be love if it could not lead to crime.' Such a conception would have been rejected with contempt by men like Lovelace and Montrose.

11

## TO ALTHEA FROM PRISON

1. *unconfined*: opposed to the physical confinement of the lover's person.

4. *grates* could mean either the grated windows of the prisoner's cell or the lattice bars from behind which prisoners were allowed to see their friends.

5. *tangled*: metaphorically of course; cf. Herrick,

'It chanced a ringlet of her hair  
Caught my poor soul as in a snare.'

7. *wanton*: play, sport.

10. *With no allaying Thames*: with no water to weaken the wine. Allay is another form (or 'doublet') of 'alleviate.'

11. *careless*: in the literal sense—free from care.

13. *i. e.* when we drown our sorrows in wine.

15. 'Tipple' usually means to drink strong drink habitually.

17. *committed*: confined in a cage; cf. to 'commit to prison.'

23. *enlarged* : unconfined (1.1.) ; to enlarge often means to set free.

25-6 have become almost proverbial.

### WILLIAM COLLINS

12

#### HOW SLEEP THE BRAVE

It need hardly be pointed out how this little lyric comes home to us today with a fresh fullness of meaning.

The handling of personifications is a great test of a poet. Most eighteenth century personifications are frigid and conventional; but here Spring, Honour and Freedom have a genuine being and meaning.

6. *Than Fancy's feet*: than any ground ever pictured by the imagination.

7. *their knell is rung*: possibly a reminiscence of the dirge in Shakespeare's *Tempest* ('Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell'). The knell, strictly, refers to the tolling of the 'passing-bell' at death.

### OLIVER GOLDSMITH

13

#### THE VILLAGE CLERGYMAN

This beautiful picture of the village clergyman reminds us of the country parson described by Chaucer in his '*Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*' and of the good Bishop Myriel in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. Like them he practised Christianity as well as preached it. The portrait is almost certainly founded on Goldsmith's memories of his father.

7. *ran his race*: lived his life (a scriptural expression).

10. The political and religious changes from the Restoration to the Hanoverian accession afforded only too much temptation to the weaker clerics to fall in with the creed of 'the varying hour.' The popular song entitled 'The Vicar of Bray' humorously sketches the career of one who adopted his views to successive changes.

12. *to rise*: sc. himself (to preferment).

13-16. Doubtless a remembrance of the charity practised by Goldsmith's father towards beggars and 'tramps' ('the vagrant train').

19. *the broken soldier*: in the 18th century as in Elizabethan days, the lot of the wounded soldier, discharged as medically unfit, was hard indeed. If he was unfit to work, he could only beg. The nation had not yet begun to have a conscience in these matters.

21. *tales of sorrow done*: when he had told his tales of sorrow.

22. *Shouldered his crutch*: sc. like a rifle. 'Shoulder arms' is still an order practised by rifle regiments.

26. *i. e.* he pitied them as a preliminary to relieving their wants, simply because they were unhappy. He did not examine their claims too closely.

34. *brighter worlds*: the hope of Heaven.  
*led the way*: sc. by his own virtuous example.

40. *praise*: sc or Good; =prayer.

41. *grace*: expression or look of true piety.

52. *serious thoughts*: of these of course the 'grieves' were part.

54. *midway*: half way up its height.

55. *rolling clouds*: the cares; grieves of ll. 50 and 51, which are surmounted by the clear sunshine of faith.

## WILLIAM BLAKE

14

## TO THE MUSES

The complaint that real poetry is dead has often been made—and often disproved by events. It was made with better reason than usual by Blake who might well have been excused for thinking in 1783 (when this poem was published in *Poetical Sketches*) that the fountain of English poetry had run dry. But it is darkest before the dawn and in 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* announced (though but few heard it at the time) the beginning of a new and great era.

1. *Ida*: whether Blake meant the mountain near Troy (familiarised in English verse of Tennyson's *Oenone*, or the mountain in Crete on which Zeus (Jupiter), is said to have been reared, is doubtful.

3. *chambers of the sun*: possibly a reference to Apollo the God of music and of song, who was also the Sun-God.

12. *Fair Nine*: the nine muses of classical mythology.

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

16

## FIDELITY

2. The fox has a short, sharp cry, a genuine 'bark.'

20. *turn*: 'a small lake or mere, mostly high up in the mountains.'

26. The splash which the fish makes as it leaps out of the water sounds, as it were, friendly and cheerful in that lonely place.

32. The blasts of wind seem to wish to hurry past, but the barrier of Helvellyn stops them.

62—4. 'It is not in a spirit of idle wonder at a supernatural reach of virtue that Wordsworth pays his tribute; he is reluctant to have to do wit

supernatural occurrences or with supernatural morality. To love and to be strong, this is the fulfilling of the law, for beast and man.' (Sir Walter Raleigh.)

17

## TO MILTON

3. *altar, sword and pen* : the priest, the soldier, the writer.
4. *hall and bower* : a phrase common in Scott=knights and ladies (lit. the great hall of the castle and the ladies' apartments.)
8. *manners* ; in the older and deeper sense of the word=Latin : moras, character.
14. Probably Wordsworth was thinking not only of Milton's austere life but of the long drudgery which he laid upon himself as Latin Secretary to the Commonwealth, a drudgery which resulted in his blindness.

18

## THE RAINBOW

7. *The child...* : The man exists potentially in the child, as the oak in the acorn. Hence in an oft quoted phrase Wordsworth calls the child 'father of the man.'

9. 'Piety' is used here very nearly in the sense of the Latin pietas—which included any natural and dutiful affection, especially the affection of a son for his father; (e. g. Virgil's 'pius Aeneas'). Hence the usual interpretation of Wordsworth's meaning here is that our natural tendency to idealise our own past (or some aspects of it) and look upon it with affection is a kind of duty. But a more logical interpretation would be to take 'natural piety' as meaning piety towards nature (as displayed in an instinctive response to her beauty).

## SIR WALTER SCOTT

19

## CORONACH

1—8. Note the antithesis between nature as renewing herself (typified by the reviving fountain) and man who dies once for all.

9.—16. Develop and repeat (with slight variation) another antithesis ; corn is reaped only when ripe, leaves fall only when scar, but man can be cut off untimely.

10. *ears* : sc. of corn.
12. *in glory* : in his glorious prime.
15. *in flushing* : not perhaps a happy phrase to apply to a flower. We speak of a river when in full flow as being 'flush' with its banks. Hence 'in flushing' =in full vigour.

17. *corrie*: (Gaelic) properly means a round hollow in the hills, a mountain dell.

18. *cumber*: (from Late Latin *cumbrus*, a barrier)=difficulty, trouble. The verb *cumber* (cf. *encumber*) is much commoner than the substantive.

Notice the simple and poetical 'foot' and 'hand' (= 'nunner and 'warrior.')

20

## THE QUIET LIFE

(Lucy Ashton's Song.)

From *The Bride of Lammermoor*, Chapter 3.

21

## THE STRENUOUS LIFE

These lines form the motto at the head of chapter 23 of *Old Mortality*. Scott did not claim all these mottoes as his own, and it now appears that this famous stanza was written by a Major Mordaunt.

2. *the sensual world* : those who care merely for safety and comfort. cf. Milton (Lycidas.)

' Fame is the spur that clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights and live laborious days '

i. e. Fame appeals to a noble mind and is the last infirmity which it gets rid of.

22

## HELVELLYN

10. *Pilgrim of Nature*: probably refers to his 'frequent solitary rambles.'

21. *requiem*: (lit. ' rest ')=religious service for the dead.

27. *scutcheons*: armorial bearings.

28. *canopied pall*: the dark cloth that covers the coffin as with a canopy.

31. *aisle* : properly, the wing of a church, or the side passage.

35. *wilder'd* : astray or confused, (bewildered).

23

## FLODDEN

The Battle of Flodden was fought in 1513 between the Scots under James iv and the English under the Earl of Surrey, at Flodden Hill in Northumberland. The battle was most desperate and night fell upon the

combat. At dawn however the Scots with a loss in killed of nearly 10,000—a huge number for an army in those days—including the King himself. The English lost nearly 5000.

1. *they* : Clara and the monk.
- dark'ning* : night was falling.
10. A bill was a kind of axe with a hooked blade.
13. The spears of the Scots are compared to a dense forest.  
  cf. *Lady of the Lake* vi. XVI :  
    ‘Their centre ranks with pike and spear  
    A twilight forest frowned.’
17. *serried phalanx* : compact body of men in close order. Phalanx was originally a term especially connected with the Macedonian army.
18. *Groom* : servant.
21. *thin* : reduced in numbers.
30. *swoln* : sc. by the melting snow.
32. The river Tweed is the boundary between England and Scotland.
44. *shiver'd* : broken to pieces.

## 24

## FITZ-JAMES AND RODERICK DHU

From *The Lady of the Lake* (Canto v.)

4. *promise* refers to the vow Fitz-James had made to avenge Blanche of Devon, wronged by Roderick, and killed by one of his men for warning Fitz-James of his danger.
8. *with banner...* : i. e. with my army behind me.
10. *love-lorn* : strictly = love-lost (forsaken by the loved one) ; here simply = suffering the pangs of separation.
- swain* : (1) young rustic (2) rustic lover (from the love-making common in pastoral poetry) (3) any lover.
16. *curlew* : a bird with a wild, shrill cry.
19. Armed Highlanders. *Bonnets* : Highland caps.
27. *plaied* : wearing a plaid (a kind of long shawl with ‘tartan’) (chequered) pattern peculiar to the clan.)
41. *Benledi's living side* : the side of Benledi covered with living men. Benledi is a mountain N. E. of Loch Katnni.

## CHARLES LAMB

## 26

## THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

The theme of the friends that we have lost, through death, separation or difference is a theme not rare in poetry.

Extract no 53 in Part II (Coleridge) touches upon the last aspect.

Scott in the Introduction to Canto ii of *Marmion*, and Thackeray in his *Ballad of Bouillabaisse* handle the subject, each in his own way.

This poem is one of the few obvious successes in irregular and unrhymed verses. The general effect is trochaic.

5. *orones* : familiar companions : a somewhat colloquial word but introduced here with excellent effect by Lamb.

7. Like most normal men Lamb had loved in his youth, but his devotion to his sister always came first.

10. *a friend* : probably Charles Lloyd.

11. *ingrate* : ungrateful men.

15. Refers to Coleridge, his life-long friend. Lamb died less than six months after Coleridge.

#### THOMAS MOORE

27

#### WHEN HE WHO ADORES THEE

10. *reason* : the antithesis between 'earliest love' and 'reason' may be that between the emotions and the intellect (both of which he devoted to his country) or the emphasis may be on 'earliest'; in that case 'reason' would mean 'my maturer and more thoughtful age.'

28

#### AT THE MID HOUR OF NIGHT

1. *weeping* : the dew which falls at night is sometimes spoken of in poetry as the tears of the stars.

8. *orison* : properly = a prayer (from Latin *oratio*); e.g. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, iii. i. 89

'nymph, in thy orisons

Be all my sins remembered.'

30

#### DEAR HARP OF MY COUNTRY

With this little poem we may compare Scott's Farewell to the Harp of the North, at the end of *The Lady of the Lake*.

9. *numbers* : (Latin *numeri*) is often used of poetry, song, or music. (The root idea is that of beats which are counted.)

15 and 16. The reference is to the so-called Aeolian harp, a sounding-board on which are strung strings of different thickness tuned to the same

note. When these vibrate in the wind they produce the sounds known to musical science as the 'harmonies' of this note. Coleridge wrote a poem on *The Aeolian Harp*.

## LORD BYRON

31

## ELEGY ON THYRZA

Palgrave called this poem 'a masterly example of Byron's command of strong thought and close reasoning in verse.' Goethe said that as soon as Byron began to think, he was like a child. Both criticisms have a good deal of truth—when Byron handles any matter which he can *feel*, his emotion provides him with vigorous thought; when he tries to philosophise, he is commonplace. Milton's definition of good poetry as 'simple, sensuous (i. e. full of distinct sense-images) and passionate' is exemplified by this poem.

13. *So* : as long as, provided that.  
 18. That what I loved is now nothing (has utterly perished) cf. Shelley, (*Adonais*)

'Alas that all we loved of him should be,  
 But for our grief, as if it had not been.'

26. *what were worse* : what would be worse (if it were the case).  
 30. *lowers* : frowns.  
 36. *sc.* which.  
 63. *sc.* which.  
 71. Probably; endears thy buried love more to me.

32

## SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

These lines are said to have been written in honour of Byron's cousin Mrs. Wilmot.

5. *mellow'd to* : suggesting in the soft harmony of her aspect.  
 8. *had* : would have.  
 9. *raven tress* : hair as dark as the raven's wing.  
 14. *eloquent* : sc. of peace and goodness.

33

## THE MAGIC OF NIGHT

(From *Parisina*.)

11. *that clear obscure* : that combination of clearness and obscurity.

H. W. LONGFELLOW

34

## ATTENDANT SPIRITS

These lines are translated from Uhland, a German lyric poet of the 19th century.

35

## THE DEATH OF MINNEHAHA

(From *Hiawatha*)

10. *Minjehahwin*: Longfellow often introduces an Indian word as a synonym of the English equivalent which he has just used, when the word is euphonious.

13. *Gitche Manitou*: the Great Spirit, the Master of Life.

21. Notice the repetition with slight variation—a trick of style which Longfellow learned from the *Kalevala*. There are other instances in our extract.

33. *Dacotahs*: the word Dacotah means 'allied' and refers to the seven tribes which composed the 'Seven Great Council Fires' or Dakotan confederacy as historians call it.

They belonged to the Sioux family and inhabited, or, rather, roamed over much of the central part of the United States; North Dakota and South Dakota are now States of the U. S. A.

47. The Falls of Minnehaha near Fort Snelling are on a stream that runs into the Mississippi near the modern St. Paul. Hiawatha's wife was born near them and was named after them.

The minds of the dying often turn to the scenes of their childhood. cf. Virgil 'dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.'

50. A possible reminiscence of Goethe's *Erlkönig*.

57. *Pauguk*: Death.

65. Similar instances of what we now call telepathy have been occasionally reported, on what many think convincing evidence.

74. *Wahonowin*: a cry of lamentation.

110. The Isles of the Blest were an old Greek conception. They were situated somewhere in the dim West, beyond the known world, and were inhabited by those whom the Gods had exempted from death. Later on they were identified with Madeira or the Canary Islands. The Vale of Avalon, so beautifully described by Tennyson, is a Celtic version of the same myth. In this passage they are equivalent to 'Heaven' or 'Paradise'; we may compare the Happy Fields of the Ancient Egyptians.

## A. H. CLOUGH

36

## THE STREAM OF LIFE

21. *roar* : sc. of the 'inevitable sea' into the waves of which the river of life flows.

23. *sun* : figuratively put for a life after death.  
the word 'scarce' is characteristic of Clough's attitude.

37

## SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT AVAILETH

This well-known poem is typical of Clough's creed ; intellectual certainty may be unattainable, but that is no ground for pessimism ; the old virtues and the old duties still hold good. It is the part of a man therefore to work and strive with courage and hope. Good work will tell in the end.

6. *smoke* : refers of course to the smoke of the battle-field.

11. *making* : a word often used by sailors of the incoming tide.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

38

(From) RUGBY CHAPEL (November 1857)

As an instance of unrhymed but regular verse (which is not the normal five-foot 'blank' verse) this poem may be compared with *Hiawatha*. There the metre is trochaic ; here it is anapaestic. Like Milton, Matthew Arnold tried to reproduce in English the effect of Greek choric metres ; 'what I have done,' he said, 'is to try to follow rhythms which produced on my own feeling a similar impression to that produced on it by the rhythms of Greek choric poetry.' He was referring in this passage more specially to the choruses in his *Merope*, but *Rugby Chapel* and *Heine's Grave* belong to the same class of metrical experiment. Whether they are completely successful or not is a matter of opinion.

3. *dank* : used of things which are unpleasantly damp.

10. cf. 20

15. *force* : sc. of character.

17. *of. Tennyson, Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington.* l. 82.

30. *of. The Scholar Gipsy* ;

'Thou waitest for the spark from heaven ! and we  
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
Who never deeply felt nor clearly willed  
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,  
Whose *vague* resolves never have been fulfilled...'

42. *of*, again *The Scholar Gipsy* ;  
 ' Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
 Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,  
 And each half lives a hundred different lives...'

56-60. *cf. Tennyson's Ulysses* ;  
 ' Death closes all : but something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done ...'

## I. L. STEVENSON

39

## IN MEMORIAM F. A. S.

3. *April* : youth ; *December* : age.  
*cf. Shelley, Adonais* ;  
 ' From the contagion of the world's slow stain  
 He is secure and now can never mourn  
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain—'

10. *You alone* : i. e. the ' stricken ' mourner.

40

## REQUIEM

The philosophy of youth was Stevenson's creed. Courage, kindness and energy were the qualities he valued, and to the last he had the heart of a boy.

3. *gladly die* : because I made full use of my life.  
 5. *you grave* : which you should engrave.

## DAVID SLATER

41

MAY 1910

4. *cf. Scott, Helvellyn*, l. 25.

15. *drone* : the male of the honey-bee which does no work. Hence = idler.

24. King Edward played the part of the Peacemaker of Europe with great skill, but all the while a storm cloud was gathering in central Europe which no one man could dissipate and it burst in 1914.

29. "His last words were 'I have done my duty'." *The Times* 9th May, 1910.

## JOHN MASEFIELD

42

## LAUGH AND BE MERRY

6. God is represented as a poet: the mighty rhythm of the universe is God's 'joy in a rhyme.'

14. The comparision of life to an inn (a temporary resting place) is a very old idea. cf FitzGerald's Omar Khayyam, 'Lo in this battered caravanserai' (no. 60 in Part II).

## PATRICK MACGILL

43

## THE FIGHTING AT LOOS

Older war poetry generally dealt with the pageant of warfare, with the gallantry of the soldier and the fame that brave men win. But modern warfare is generally an unromantic and unpleasant business and it is as well that poets like Mr. MacGill though he is by no means devoid of sentiment—should gloss facts over with a veneer of false romance. The verses that follow may be described as snapshots of bits of the successive stages of the battle in and round Loos during the 'Great Push.'

1. *fire-fly lamps*: the stars.
2. 'To cross the top' or 'go over the top' is to advance from the (comparative) security of one's own trench against the enemy's trenches.
3. *another fire*: that of the rising sun. Attacks are often timed to open just before dawn.
4. *foeman's wire*: the barbed-wire entanglements in front of the enemy's trenches.
8. *cellar stair*: cellars are generally fairly shell-proof. At Loos Germans had been hiding in these cellars and had been caught by bombing parties.
9. *Toll*; i. e. killed by the bomb which exacts a tax in lives.
10. *bullock*: as a bullock drops dead under the blow of the butcher's pole-axe.
11. *Sniped*: shot by snipers (expert individual marksmen, concealed under any handy 'cover,' who wait to 'pick off' any of the enemy who exposes himself.) The Germans developed 'sniping' into a fine art. German snipers were often discovered in trees, on house-tops, etc.
23. *the quick*: the living i. e. the British survivors.
26. *shell-scarred*: large shells which burst in the ground make great holes or pits.

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